Stereo-Rama Reels by J. Clement

Stereo-Rama, several Italian companies, created View-Master look alike reels in the 1950s to 1960s. The reels had long life Kodachrome film which still retains good color in 2025. However, the reels seem to all have a brown cast which may indicate some fading. The company also marketed look-alike View-Master viewers. It had a large depth in scenes, but couldn't rival View-Master.

The early production reels used similar laminated materials to View-Master which made them very durable. Some reels were on what looks like brown carboard that often stick in viewers. These may have been later reissues. All of the scenes on their reels have frame violations with often extreme popout unlike the traditional View-Master reels. I generally correct the extreme pop-out for easy viewing.

The alignment of the film chips is generally poor and the first reel in "Le Petite Capuchon Rouge" was printed upside down.

Stereo-Rama 0201 Protagsnisti del film "Ulisse"
These are cast pictures from the 1954 film "Ulysses". It was planned to be in 3D, but shot in 2D.

0201 1 Silvano Mangano as Penelope

0201 2 Kirk Douglas as Ulysses

There was a set of children's diorama reels duplicating some of the View-Master releases.

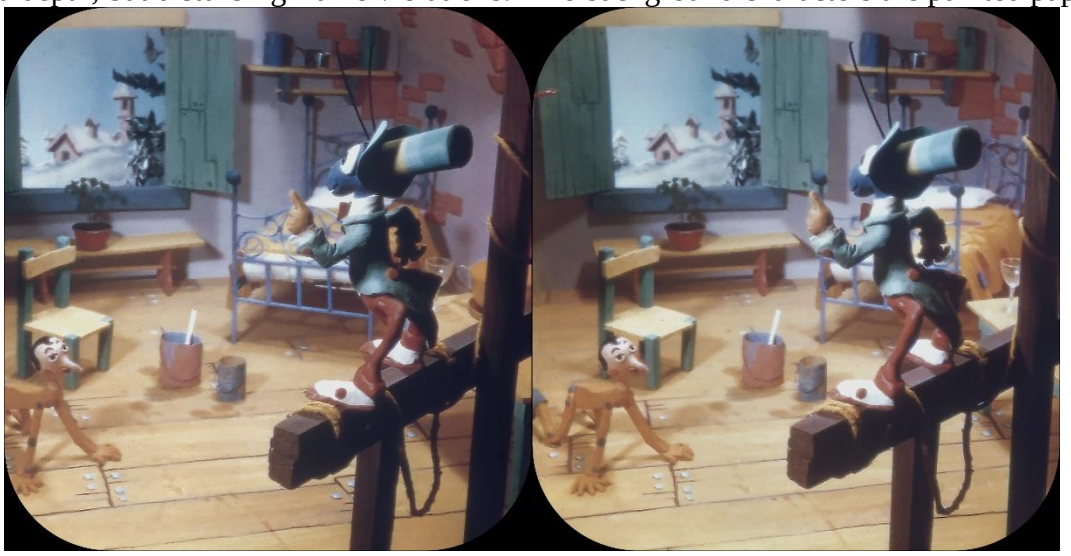
1. FS-1..3 Pinnocchio (3 reels)
2. Le Petit Chat Voleur – The little thief cat
3. L'Ogre er la petite chevre – The little billygoat and the ogre
4. Le Petit Pecheur – The little fisherman.
5. FS-14,15 Le Petite Capuchon Rouge – Little Red Riding Hood (2 reels)
6. Les Trois Petite Cochons – The three little piglets (2 reels)
7. Blancheneige et les petits gnomes du bois – Snow White… (3 reels)
8. Le Vilain petit canro – The ugly little duckling (2 reels)
9. FS-45..47 Cenerentola – Cinderella (3 reels)
10. Le Lievre et la Tortue – The hare and the tortoise

Le Vilain petit canaro – The ugly little duckling This two reel set sort of following the Andersen story is cute and has 12 scenes unlike the View-Master reels. As a grown up swan, he just looks like a white duck. The images have been restored and the frame violations removed.

FS-41 02 Nascono tre anatroccoli – Three ducklings are hatched

FS-42 14 laghetto ammirato da tutti gli animali - At the pond admired by all animals

The Adventures of Pinocchio is a set of 3 reels which follows the original book. There are other Pinocchio sets which expand on specific adventures. The figures are large and prominent, with good diorama depth, but disturbing frame violations. The background characters are painted paper cutouts.



Stereo-Rama FS-01 02 Pinocchio - The cricket speaking-LR

Stereo-Rama FS-01 05 Pinocchio - The puppets party

Stereo-Rama FS-02 13 Pinocchio - Flying with the dove-LR

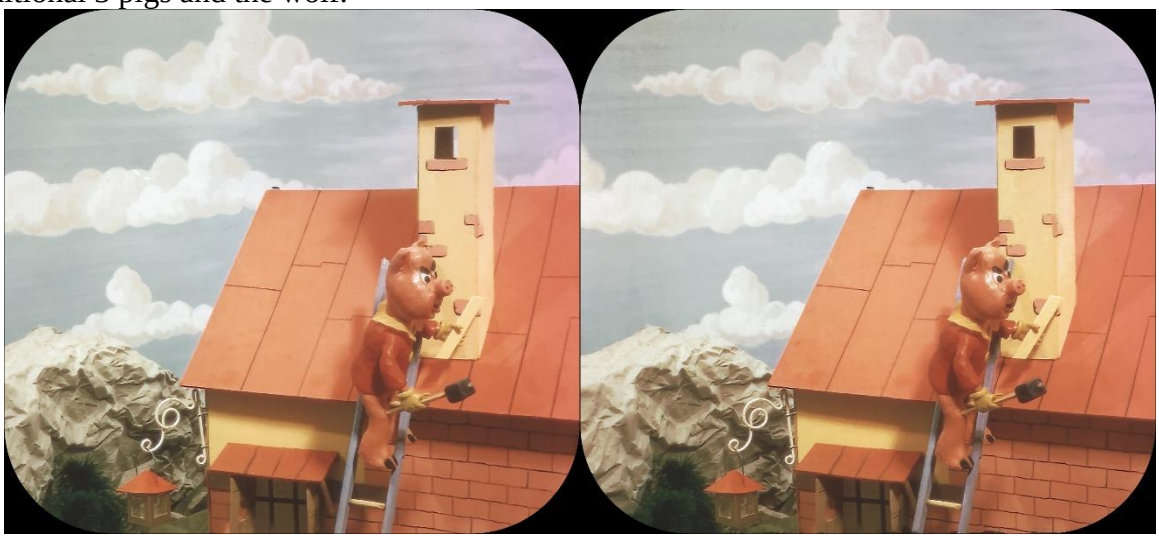
Le Petite Capuchon Rouge – Little Red Riding Hood is a nicely done set created by M. Sandro Angiolini. They cut some corners by making the trees painted cutouts. It follows the Perrault story, but with the later gentle ending instead of having Red Riding Hood eaten. Colors were restored.

FS-15 1 - Cappuccetto Rosso Parte con la Torta – Red Riding hood leaves with the cake

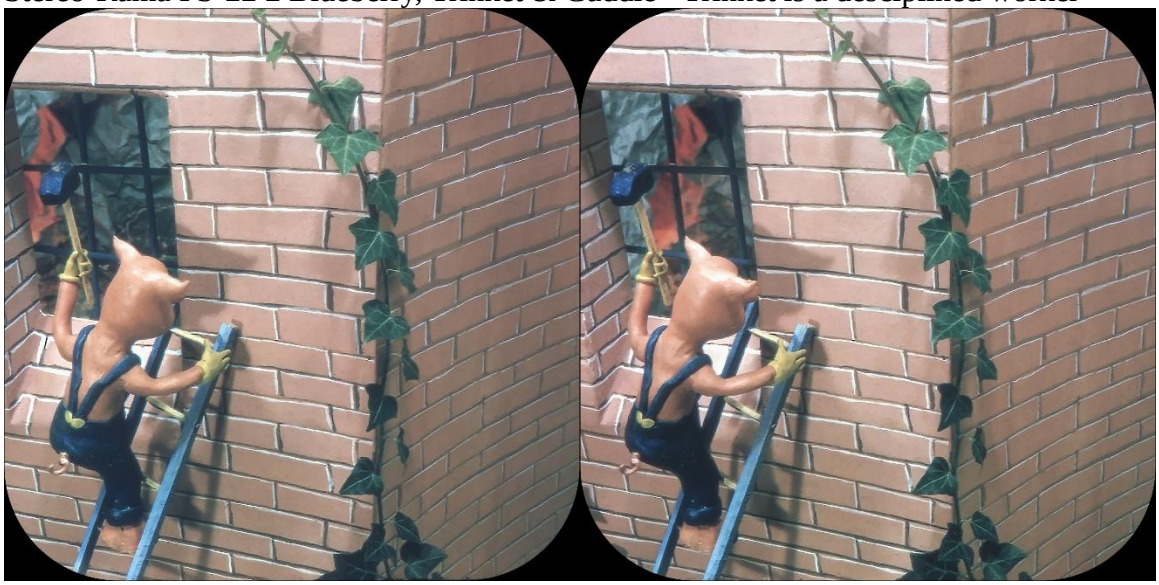
FS-14 6 - Entra e mangia la nonna – Enter and eat the grandmother

FS-15 11 - Un Boscailo ode le grida – The woodsman hears the cries

The Three Little Piglets was also created by M. Sandro Angiolini. He uses the same wolf figurine, but has some wonderful depth effects at interesting angles. The story varies substantially from the traditional 3 pigs and the wolf.



Stereo-Rama FS-22 2 Blueberry, Trinket & Cuddle - Trinket is a desciplined worker



Stereo-Rama FS-23 11 Blueberry, Trinket & Cuddle - He breaks the grille

Stereo-Rama FS-23 12 Blueberry, Trinket & Cuddle - He strikes the wolf when he returns

Snow White and the Gnomes of the Woods is a 3 reel packet with what looks like stock dolls for the queen and Snow White. The 7 Gnomes are cute and very individualistic. It follows the usual storyline. The dioramas resemble the very early View-Master fairy tales with small figures in a large space.

Stereo-Rama FS-30 3 Snow White- The queen order to kill the girl-LR

Stereo-Rama FS-31 09 Snow White - the little girl greets the dwarves who go to work

Cenerentola is an amalgam of the Perault and Grimm's versions. As usual there is little variation in the facial expressions, with some awkward poses. One wonders why crown scenes use "baby dolls". A fairy pigeon talks to her and brings her finery. There are obvious ripples in some of the floors.

Stereo-Rama FS-45 7 Cenerentola - The beautiful one gets into the carriage and leaves

Stereo-Rama FS-46 3 Cenerentola - Cinderella dances with the prince

Stereo-Rama FS-47 3 Cenerentola - The shoe is hers, much to the envy of her sisters

Don Juan's Adventures (Don Giovanni) was a set of 4 reels with scenes on the 1956 set of the movie Don Juan. The set had booklets with caption text in Italian, French, German and English, but no captions on the reels or full stories. One scene was out of order and the English captions were sometimes incorrect or misleading as well as having poor misleading grammar. One scene is a composite of several 3D and 2D images with some bad alignment.

The movie was definitely adult oriented and would not have passed the US code restrictions with lots of outright dialog about infidelity with violent comic duels. The reels are G rated and Don Juan's servant as the main character. The pictures are nice but often too posed.

Stereo-Rama FS-26 05b-03 Don Juan's Adventure - Sgaranella chasing runaway coach
This scene was originally miscaptioned and out of order.

Stereo-Rama FS-28 18 Don Juan's Adventure - Dawn, 2 sweethearts leave with the caravan.
This shows Serranilla (an actress) and Sgaranella, Don Juan's servant.

Unlike View-Master there is no complete set of books for each type of reel. The book by Favio Sabatelli "Stereo-Rama and the other Italian makes of View-Master look-alikes" has information about the various makers and lists of reels as well as some pictures of packet covers. While it is useful, it doesn't list reels by category such as movies, TV shows, juvenilia, diorama… In addition the dates of creation/copyright and the artists are not always listed. It is not possible to say for certain what the reels include. It is still a valuable reference.

View-Master reels were often also remiss in not crediting the artists. However Wolfgan Sell in his book lists many reels by artist and has provided valuable information about who created specific dioramas. While he did list photographers, it is only possible to pin down who created some reels.

Sabatelli says the diorama reels are poor quality. They have a different esthetic. They use paper cutouts similar to the View-Maste Montyne reels and more distant scenes similarly to the early View-Master Hollywood reels. The figures are more cartoon like than Florence Thomas's beautifully crafted clay sculptures. They do use dolls and do not change the expressions, but this also happens in some View-Master reels. I would rate them as decent quality with some standout scenes, but not up to the consistently great work of Florence Thomas, Joe Liptak, Montyne and Mary Lewis. They also include some episodes and story variations not in the View-Master or Stori-View sets. They can be enjoyable.

M. Sandro Angiolini credited in Little Red Riding Hood and the Three Little Piglets was a well known comic artist in Italy. his comic book style is evident in both of these sets. Snow White and theThree Little Pigs share some of the same buildings and accessories like lanterns. The Ugly Duckling may have a different artist because it has sculpted trees and leaves in the foreground, but paper cutouts in the background. Pinocchio is very different, so it was again probably another artist.

The Pinocchio set had such extreme popout with visual distress that taming it sometimes removed an important character. By transposing the character to the other frame and then cropping the result to have the 2D section only seen by the opposite eye a decent stereo image behind the frame was possible. This is an arduous task because various objects must be realigned, so it was only done for important images. The realignment to remove the extreme popout and frame violations removed some details, which is unfortunate. The frame violations are extremely disturbing in digital displays, but not as bad when seen through the viewer. Cropping to remove the frame violations often produced portrait images rather than the 4:3 landscape orientation. Some of the scenes had very bad alignment including rotations between the R and L images. The late reels by Technofilm often had wrinkled film chips.

My personal preference is for the classical scene behind the frame, but with popouts only when they do not touch the frame. Popouts on the bottom or top of the frame are sometimes allowed. Popouts on the left or right side of the frame produce visual rivalry which can cause distress. The restorations generally follow this except for the Ulyses reel. The Ugly Duckling was restored as either the classic behind the frame, or the original with extreme pop out.

The Ugly ducking scene 1 with extreme popout in the foreground

The Ugly Duckling scene 1 with behind the frame alignment